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PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLP #2647/01 2742012  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 012012Z OCT 07  
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5134  
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 7103  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 4475  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8371  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5599  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2825  
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 0408  
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RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3598  
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RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0066  
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RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 002647

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/01/2017  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: SUCRE'S STATUS COULD KILL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Classified By: EcoPol chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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Summary  
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11. (C) Emboffs recently held separate meetings with three of Sucre city and Chuquisaca department's leading figures; discussions focused on: the fate of the Constituent Assembly, the likelihood of a referendum on returning Sucre to full capital status, and the Prefect's surprise reversal of his resignation. Representing the anti-central government view was Sucre Mayor Aydee Nava and President of the Inter-Institutional Commission on Full Capital Status Jaime Barron. Defending (albeit weakly) the central government was newly reinstalled Chuquisaca department Prefect David Sanchez. The three presented their views on the fate of the Constituent Assembly, arguing the assembly is likely dead if the question of returning Sucre to full capital status is not resolved. All support a proposal for a referendum on Sucre's status, but see it as improbable. All including, Sanchez himself, commented that the impetus for the prefect's return -- after his resignation on August 30 -- was the ruling Movement Toward Socialism's (MAS) fear that it would lose the prefecture in a new election. While Sucre is the host to the Constituent Assembly, none of the three discussed the most polemical issues facing the assembly other than the status of Sucre. This singular focus highlights the fact that Sucre's residents are far from giving up their fight for full capital status, boding poorly for the assembly's future. End Summary.

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Sucre Holds the Fate of the Constituent Assembly  
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12. (C) In three separate meetings (on September 19 and 20) Sucre Mayor Aydee Nava, the President of the Inter-Institutional Commission on Full Capital Status Jaime Barron, and Chuquisaca department Prefect David Sanchez shared their views on the future of the Constituent Assembly and several other topics. The three agreed that the fate of

the Constituent Assembly was rather tenuous, and that it was linked to the issue of returning Sucre to full capital status. Sucre Mayor Nava appeared the most inflexible of the three. She argued that her city would not allow the assembly to reconvene on October 8 if the issue of returning the legislative and executive branches to Sucre was not reinserted into the assembly's agenda. (Note: The ruling Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) managed to strike the topic from the agenda on August 15 via a simple majority vote. End Note). Nonetheless, Nava expressed considerable doubt that negotiations between the opposition and the MAS, and between Sucre and La Paz, would yield the result she and her constituents are seeking. The mayor seemed comfortable with (or at least resigned to) the possibility that her city would become a battleground between forces who support Sucre's return to full capital status (generally anti-MAS and anti-central government) and those groups who wish to see the status-quo remain (generally pro-MAS and pro-central government).

13. (C) Barron explained that the issue of Sucre's status was brought up in seven separate Constituent Assembly commissions, arguing that the Constituent Assembly (and the MAS specifically) could try to ignore the issue, but that the issue would never go away. Unlike Nava, Barron had a less fatalistic view on the subject, and repeated the often heard comment "Bolivia goes to the precipice but always pulls back." He cited the MAS' recent decision to close the Constituent Assembly for a month's recess and the relatively peaceful pro-MAS rally on September 10 as new examples of Bolivia pulling back from the brink. That said, Barron like Nava did not express high hopes for the negotiations between his city and La Paz that the central government was sponsoring.

14. (C) Prefect David Sanchez mentioned that his resignation on August 30 helped reduce tensions in Sucre and the Constituent Assembly. Sanchez resigned stating that he did not want remain prefect and have blood on his hands, if what appeared to be inevitable violence ensued in Sucre on or around September 10. (Comment: Sanchez is probably correct, and not simply stroking his own ego, in stating he helped reduce tensions. Sanchez's very public resignation and his rejection of the central government's anti-Sucre bias (which contrasts with the Morales administration's stated impartiality) on the capital question probably did help to ease tensions. Morales likely realized that public opinion would turn against his government, if he and his followers did not back down a bit, at least temporarily, on the Sucre issue. End Comment).

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Why the Prefect Came Back  
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15. (C) Prefect Sanchez's return, after his public resignation, generated much conversation. All three, including Sanchez, acknowledged that the MAS wanted him back so that the party would not lose the prefecture, given that Chuquisaca department has now fallen into the opposition camp because of the Sucre issue. Interestingly, Sanchez admitted that he was not sure whether his relationship with President Morales and the central government was any better following his return. The prefect later stated, perhaps referring to himself, that "some in the MAS are not happy."

16. (C) Comment: It is not clear if Prefect Sanchez will stay in his position very term. At one point during the conversation we raised concerns about Morales' undemocratic tendencies; Sanchez then asked his aide to leave the room. Sanchez expressed his own misgivings about Evo and informed us that he has directly told the president that he needs to be more conciliatory towards the opposition, apparently to no effect. Sanchez has never been a MAS true believer and finds unacceptable what he called "racism" emanating from the central government. Sanchez, an evangelical Christian, may also be uncomfortable with many of Morales' comments against the church (albeit against the Catholic Church). Finally, he

confided that the stress of his job had contributed to marital problems, for which he and his wife were receiving counseling. His values and his family problems may lead Sanchez to resign again. Alternatively, if the MAS finds an electable replacement, it is quite likely that Evo would want to rid himself of Sanchez. End Comment.

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A Sucre vs. La Paz Referendum?  
All Pain, No Gain for La Paz  
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17. (C) The three stated their support for a referendum on the capital issue, yet they all seemed to understand the difficulty in arriving at such a referendum. Jaime Barron summoned up the Sucre versus La Paz referendum dilemma best. Should La Paz lose the referendum, the legislative and executive branch would move to Sucre, taking thousands of jobs with them. Barron explained that La Paz has much to lose, and nothing to gain. Meanwhile Sucre is in the opposite position, nothing to lose and everything to gain. Barron added that Sucre today would likely win the referendum. He noted that the majority of voters in Chuquisaca, Sucre's home department, Potosi its neighboring department as well as the four lowland (aka media luna) departments of Beni, Pando, Santa Cruz and Tarija all favor Sucre over La Paz. Barron cited Oruro and La Paz departments as the only places where La Paz city retains support. With no possible upside and a high likelihood of losing, it is unlikely that either La Paz or the MAS would agree to a referendum.

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What is the MAS Prepared to Give Sucre?  
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18. (C) Barron, Nava, and Sanchez discussed what the MAS has offered Sucre in return for taking the Sucre capital question off the table. Nava mentioned that the MAS has offered to relocate several ministries, specifically mentioning the Ministry of Justice. In addition, Barron stated the Tax Service, the Comptroller's Office, and a certain number of Congressional sessions were on the table. Barron and Sanchez also mentioned that the MAS has offered to pay for and expedite the construction of a new airport.

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A MAS Tactical Error  
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19. (C) Barron noted that MAS had committed a tactical error in drawing the line on Sucre so early, stating "they (the MAS) did not use their coco (head)." Barron explained that the MAS should have allowed for debate on the issue until December. By then other hot topics might have been resolved, and delegates (and the Bolivian people in general) would have been less likely to give up on the Constituent Assembly. He added that by December many people (especially students) would be on vacation and no longer in Sucre.

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Comment  
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10. (C) Despite the fact that the Constituent Assembly is based in their city, noticeably absent from all three (separate) discussions was attention to some of the core issues facing the assembly )- polemical issues such as re-election of the president, proposals to change the congress, and departmental versus indigenous autonomy. The status of Sucre was almost exclusively the topic of discussion. Perhaps this focus was not surprising given the old adage that "all politics is local," and that all three (Nava, Barron, and Sanchez) call Sucre their home. Nonetheless, the sole focus on the status of Sucre highlights assembly's precarious situation. Despite MAS and La Paz's attempts to remove the "capital question" from Constituent Assembly, Sucre's residents will not let it go. Unless attitudes in Sucre and La Paz change soon ) by October 8

when the assembly resumes -- the status of Sucre may end up  
torpedo-ing the assembly. End Comment.  
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